

AsKEW

AN ADDRESS

*Author*

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

**MEDICAL SOCIETY,**

OF THE

**STATE OF DELAWARE,**

**AT THE ANNUAL SESSION,**

**HELD AT DOVER,**

JUNE, 8, 1852.

BY

**HENRY F. ASKEW, M. D.,**

**PRESIDENT.**

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE SOCIETY.

WILMINGTON, DEL.:

HENRY ECKEL, & CO., PRINTERS.

1852.

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**PROCEEDINGS**  
**OF THE**  
**MEDICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE,**  
**At its Annual Session, held at Dover, June 8, 1852.**

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[EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES.]

*Resolved*, That the thanks of this audience be, and the same are, hereby tendered to HENRY F. ASKEW, M. D., for his interesting and instructive oration; and that he be requested to furnish the Medical Society of Delaware with a copy of the same for publication.

Attest,

B. F. CHATHAM, Secretary.

THE FORTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING

MEMORIAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

MEMORIAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE

MEMORIAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE

44th Annual Meeting, held at Dover, June 8, 1898

Guests by one of our members and their families  
(The members that have not been notified are invited to join the

association.)

I have been informed by the members of the association that the

association is now in a position to receive the following

contributions to the fund for the purchase of the monument

and the building of the monument.

association with a large portion of my personal property.

has been made.

The time and thought of the memorial monument, erected in

their honor, and so many and so many of the people of the

state, and the necessity of the collection and organization

which suggested that a new monument to be erected and

coming after the war, the time for the monument, the time for the

monument and the time, which shall be the monument, the

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# THE FOUNDERS, ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

## OF THE

### MEDICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE.

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GENTLEMEN,—

*Fellows of the Medical Society of Delaware :*

Time honored usage, and a law, that antedates half a century, demand that our regular annual meetings shall be distinguished each, by an address to be delivered before you, and our invited guests, by one of our number previously selected.

On this occasion that duty has devolved on myself as your presiding officer.

I may here appropriately remark, that those who are far more thoroughly practised than myself, to the formalities and style of public speaking, will excuse the avowal of some little diffidence on my part, whilst others who being new to such experiences, may hardly deem fitting and consistent with the maturity of middle life, and the friendly familiarity, resulting from years of intimate association with a large portion of my medical brethren, who are here assembled.

The time and thoughts of the medical practitioner, engaged in active business, are so entirely and constantly occupied with the daily routine of professional duty and engagements, that none but the initiated, can conceive of the difficulties and embarrassments which surround him, when required to elaborate and polish in becoming style for *state occasions*, his views on topics of a general character and interest, which admit not of the abstract close, harsh phrase of technical discussion.

I must throw myself therefore, on your kindness and forbearance, and even more anxiously, upon that of our fellow citizens of very different pursuits, who have honored us with their presence and countenance, on this occasion ; if habit should give to my delivery rather the stiffness of the lecturer, than the grace and elegance of the orator.

It has been said with much apparent truth, that "*Time makes the good better and the bad worse.*" What wiser or more useful course, then, can we pursue, than to cast a glance into the past, take a cursory view of the present, and determine from this research to which category we belong, and what are our prospects for future usefulness, as we travel down the corridors of time.

The "Medical Society of Delaware" has indeed, a well founded reputation to maintain. It was born in the era of Giants. Springing into existence, soon after the ever great and glorious struggle, that gave liberty to our country; and if smallest in stature among her sisters, no one will have the presumption to deny, that this gallant little State, sent forth to the councils, and the field, in those dark days, more, than her share of giant intellects. The very atmosphere of that marked age, seemed to engender lofty thoughts, and noble purposes, not only in the lights and leaders of the time, but in men of every rank, in men of every profession.

All men were then politicians. New constitutions were to be formed; new institutions to be founded; and the energy and fierce impetus given to the human mind, during this period of excitement, reacted upon the philosopher in his closet, and the physician in the varying and wearying walks of his professional occupation. Each individual knew it to be his privilege and his duty, to contribute his fraction at least, to the common weal, and therefore public interest more than now, assumed precedence over private ends.

It should be a matter of honest pride with us, that no class of our fellow citizens, displayed more thorough patriotism, and self-sacrificing attachment to their country, during, and for many years subsequent to the revolution, than did the medical profession. In each of the United colonies, and the young States that sprang phoenix-like from their ashes, that class was largely represented both in the camp and in the council. Nor was Delaware in this respect behind her sisters, nor dimmed by any superior lustre.

It is a singular fact, that there are few names in the catalogue of those, who stood pre-eminent among the pioneers of medicine, that are not equally distinguished among the statesmen, the military or the financial and executive servants of their country. As the Rev. Dr. Matthias Wilson, combining in his remarkable character, the simplicity of the child, the ardour of the political enthusiast, and the grave profundity of the accomplished scholar, carried with him



from parish to parish, from academy to synod, the knowledge and appliances of the healing art, proving that even medical practice may be rendered perepatetic, and that distinction in three professions is not always beyond the grasp of a single mind. So, many of our earlier medical worthies, with whom practice in their peculiar line, was a primary, not as in his case, a secondary thought, refused to limit their labors to the comparatively narrow field of medical duty, and in the halls of legislation gave increased dignity, and more usefulness to a pursuit, which in the genuine spirit of philanthropy, links itself with all human interests.

Though in the age of which we speak (and it has been so at other times,) the highest and brightest worth was often attended with a singular modesty; and the real founders of institutions, not unfrequently refused to be distinguished, from those who answered to their call and assisted in the work, it is therefore legitimate and laudable, at a later period, when all personal rivalries and acrimonies lie buried with the actors, sometimes to indicate or endeavor to determine, the master mind that took the initiative in any noble undertaking. As illustrative of the idea, let us allude to the history of the first, and still the greatest civil hospital in America—the Pennsylvania Hospital. The world has generally attributed to Dr. Franklin, the merit of first proposing this admirably governed refuge, and unsurpassed school of clinical medicine; whilst later times have developed the truth, and justice demands its proclamation, that the plan and the first steps of its execution are due to the two eminent brothers, Drs. Thomas and Phineas Bond. On the foundation stones were inscribed the names of the original managers, but with a beautiful prescience of that republican feeling, which was destined to become characteristic of the country, it was resolved to place the names of these gentlemen in a circle, in order that none should claim pre-eminence, among the worthy.

So in referring to the earliest record of this association in 1789, we must look far down the list of incorporators, numbering some twenty-seven in all, for the name of him whom we imagine from his position, and character, to have been the most efficient—the acting master mind, in the work of its creation. Though living evidence may not remain, positively to determine this conclusion, there can scarcely exist a doubt, that the medical society of Delaware is indebted for its origin, chiefly to the efforts and foresight

of James Tilton, of Dover, who appears from the record, for more than thirty years, to have presided over its deliberations.

The history of this remarkable man as we glean it from the recollections of his friends, a short biographical sketch, and the transactions of this society, presents us with a long unbroken series of labors and disinterested exertions, for the public good, to which he manifested the disposition to be ever ready to sacrifice his private advantage.

Born in the county of Kent, in this State, he commenced his professional studies with Dr. Ridgley, of Dover, and graduated with the first class who received the title of Doctor of Medicine in an American school; after having concluded his studies at Philadelphia, under Shippen and Morgan, who with the brothers Thomas and Phineas Bond, gave origin to the collegiate plan of instruction in the healing art, on this side of the atlantic.

Returning to his native county, he commenced the practice of medicine at Dover, in the year 1765, and had already established a high reputation, and was in the receipt of a considerable income, when the great struggle for independence—the struggle of the century, commenced. Fired with the flame of patriotism, and with an utter detestation of British tyranny, he did not hesitate a moment to relinquish a position so difficult to secure, and if once lost so much more difficult to re-establish, the position of a successful practitioner of medicine. He entered the American army as an assistant surgeon at twenty-five dollars per month, in the year 1776; perhaps little anticipating then, that his knowledge and influence would ere long, enable him to propose and accomplish material reforms in the management of military hospitals, and thus by the soundness of his suggestions, attracting the notice of his country, eventually place him in the elevated station of Surgeon General of the United States; during the occupancy of which post, he checked by his prudence, activity and energy the terrible mortality, that thinned the ranks of our army upon the frontier, and almost arrested enlistments in the war of 1812. He died. But let us not anticipate.

In 1782, he returned to Dover, and successfully recommenced his career of private exertion, but not with the intention of preferring his private good to the service of his country. On the contrary, he served at every sacrifice of personal emolument, as a member of the old Congress of 1782, and at the conclusion of that duty, con-



sented repeatedly to represent his fellow citizens in the Legislature of his native State. Compelled at length by declining health to relinquish his residence at Dover, he sought the heights of New Castle County, for the benefit of a slight difference of climate, and eventually established himself at Wilmington. During this period of his life, the desire for public usefulness, induced him to combine two duties, than which none at first observation appear less compatible, physic and finance. In the midst of his professional engagements he accepted the position of commissioner of loans.

At length old age approaching, Dr. Tilton retired in a great degree from the active practice of his profession: but even then, though "a sheaf almost ripe for the harvest," he was not long permitted to enjoy the *otium cum dignitate*. In 1812, upon the renewal of hostilities by England, he was summoned to Washington and solicited to assume the chief command of the surgical corps of the army, and after having preserved the lives of thousands, and contributed abundantly to the comfort and happiness of all, who were afflicted with disease, by the skill and judgment with which he controlled this department during the war, he continued through many peaceful years to legislate for that important branch of the national service. While on duty on the frontier in the early part of his life, he almost fell a victim to hospital fever, which for a time seriously impaired his constitution, but could not permanently arrest his energies; and when at the end of the allotted period of human existence, a disease of the knee superinduced by exposure in behalf of his country, and which rendered amputation necessary, the venerable septuagenarian still struggled at the oar, undaunted, for seven years longer, till death put a period to his career in 1822.

Such were the exertions, such the blessings conferred upon society, by one of the most conspicuous of our founders, and our first **PRESIDENT**: whose bones now lie in the grave yard, unhonored by monumental design or inscription to indicate their resting place, a fact I am confident unknown to this society or the medical profession of the State, or ere this appropriate measures would have been adopted, to testify our grateful remembrance of this great and good man. But of all the benefits bestowed immediately upon the medical society by this most excellent man, perhaps the greatest, was the fostering care, the generous friendship and disinterested patronage, which he extended to, and with which he cheered and encouraged, the youth

of our earliest Secretary, and our earliest orator, the celebrated, and, among the medical profession, the world known Edward Miller; one of the greatest medical philosophers of his age—and one who has not been exceeded in penetration, profundity nor grasp of intellect by his successors. Delaware may well be proud of such a son,—we may well be proud that his name is associated with our primitive, our earliest records. And when I contemplate the brilliancy of the character of that man, I assure you it is not without feelings of trepidation, and deep distrust, that I venture to fulfil before you those functions once performed by him.

Doctor Edward Miller, was born in Dover, in the year 1760, and was the junior of Dr. Tilton, by about fifteen years.

The ancient and honorable academy of Newark, was the theatre of his preparatory studies. In 1778, he entered the office of Dr. Charles Ridgley, of Dover; and it is by no means the least important distinction of this eminent practitioner, that he was the professional father, of two such brilliant ornaments, of the kindred sciences of medicine and surgery.

Doctor Miller before graduating, devoted two years of his life, to the service of his country as an assistant surgeon in the army, and performed one voyage to France in a vessel of war; after which he passed two winters in Philadelphia, and graduated at the university of Pennsylvania in 1784. He commenced the pursuit of his profession in the town of Frederica, but returned to Dover in 1786, and was received by Dr. Tilton, not as a rival but as a friend. The same disinterestedness which induced Dr. Tilton to decline the offer of a professorship in the medical school of Philadelphia, in order to follow the fortunes of the army, in a doubtful struggle, rendered him incapable of that petty jealousy of competition in the walks of his profession, which frequently results from the conflict of pecuniary interest, or the vain and ignoble desire to exhibit an ephemeral display on the ruins of another. Together, these brothers in science extended their anxious guardianship over the health of their fellow citizens; together they endeavored to promote the interests and advancement of the healing art; and together they labored to unite in fraternal bands, all the respectable practitioners of medicine within their native state, by the institution of the "*Medical Society of Delaware.*" It is true that Dr. Miller removed from his native state and sought a residence in the city of New York in 1796. True is it,

that there he issued, established and edited for many years, the Medical Repository, in conjunction with Dr. Elihu H. Smith and Dr. Mitchell, thus giving the *origin* to medical journalism in America; and commencing a career which brought him in correspondence with most of the learned societies, and many of the distinguished philosophers of Europe. It is true that New York was the theatre of his exertions, the locality for the display and dissemination of thought and experience of riper years. As resident physician of that port, or chief of the Quarantine, he contributed in a great degree to improvements in its sanitary regulations. Here also he won his highest fame, as professor of the practice of medicine, in their university. But it was in Delaware that his mind was moulded and formed, that his talents were first perceived, encouraged and matured. In Delaware he commenced the active duties of his life, and steadily pursued them for full twelve years. It was here that in 1793, he wrote his celebrated letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, in which he early gave evidences of that deep insight into the nature and cause of disease, which in after years enabled him to originate opinions and doctrines, that when more maturely developed by himself, his cotemporaries and successors, produced changes in the entire face of medical science, gave the initiative to the prominent theories of more than one medical school, and woke up an echo from beyond the sea. He was one of Delaware's favorite sons,—and surely then his native State may safely claim that genius, which started forth from her bosom, to illuminate the world,—and surely we may pride ourselves, upon the fact, that its first rays were shed within our halls. Dr. Rush declared of him that he was inferior to no physician in the United States.

It would be a pleasing task, if time permitted, to analyze the history of those other worthies who rallied to the call of the patriots and scholars, of whom we have just spoken; their names are inscribed on our original charter, where you will find McKinley, Way, Preston, Smith, Monroe, McDonough, Clayton, Needham, Molliston, Sykes, Luff, Cook, Wilson, Hall, Marsh, Polk, Hill, Jackson, McMechen, Latimer, McCalmont, Capelle, Peterson, Lee, with Tilton and Miller, and subsequently Vaughan, and others which time will not permit us to enumerate, most of whom were “to the manor born,” most of whom were celebrated in their day for their profound scholarship and deep and abiding integrity. These were they, who



laid the foundation and reared the superstructure of this society, whose blessings we now enjoy, and who by the depth of their researches and the brilliancy of their minds, shed a halo of glory over our State, and placed her inferior to none in the science of medicine. These names constitute a tower of strength, from whose embrasures we of later date, may look through with feelings of confidence, that our science and profession are founded upon a correct and proper basis.

We must however pause to dwell for a moment upon the labors of the bold and brilliant James Sykes, who was equally distinguished in medicine and surgery, to whom the scalpel was, "as the pen to a ready writer;" nor was he less distinguished, as the dignified Speaker of our Senate for many years, and afterwards the able Governor of our State. To his energetic public and private character, we shall have occasion to allude again: for he outlived a long blank period in our history; assisted in resuscitating and extending the usefulness of our society, and linked the past age with the present, by succeeding the venerable Tilton, as our President, after the death of that lamented officer.

Such then were the men, who gave origin and impetus to our society, and although Tilton and Miller and Way were bachelors, yet in their death the community felt their loss and mourned as a common relative.

It would be a source of great gratification to speak more particularly, of the elegant and accomplished Nicholas Way, the friend and companion of Washington; the liberal and influential Jonas Preston; the dignified Joshua Clayton; the punctual and profound George Monroe; and the young but brilliant John Vaughan; but time and your patience warn me to proceed; suffice it to say, that whilst they were eminent in their profession, most of them were elevated to high, civil and political distinction. The last of all these worthies, has long since paid the debt of nature, they rest from their labors, but their names have become immortal.

As will be naturally supposed, an institution planned by such founders, was not limited in its views to selfish and mere local interests. The terms of its charter point to two grand purposes—the permanent establishment of "regularity and public utility" in the practice of medicine and surgery—"regularity" by investing the whole body of the medical profession, with certain powers, some-

what analagous to an internal police jurisdiction ; and of "public utility," by the advancement of every species of knowledge, having direct or indirect relation to the healing art:—and for these purposes the charter was left wide and unrestricted as the wind.

At and before the period of our foundation, the medical schools of America were in their infancy, and insufficient in extent to supply the demand for educated practitioners, in a territory already so vastly expanded, with a population increasing with unprecedented rapidity. Under the necessity of the case, there sprang up on every hand, a class of medical men, whose means were insufficient to convey them to the distant centres of learning, and to support them during a long course of study. These men were thrown upon the book of nature, for their knowledge, with no other guides, than their own native shrewdness, and the few volumes of professional science, that then found their way to a young country, where humanity was still chiefly occupied, in battling for existence, with the forest and the elements. And it is astonishing, that so many of this class succeeded, in acquiring well won eminence, in the teeth or midst of such appalling disadvantages. But it was inevitable, that this system, must give rise to a large mass of ignorant pretentions, and the sacrifice of many valuable lives, was the necessary and certain consequence. To remedy this evil, partially at least, the society resolved to establish within itself, a high toned standard of professional merit ; and thus render its membership an object of desire, as a certificate of professional character, of sufficient value, to repay the recipient for the mild restraint imposed by its internal regulations. Though the Diploma of the Doctorate or Baccalaureate in Medicine was made necessary to the rank of Fellowship, in the association, its membership was obtainable by those who had been cut off from the opportunity of obtaining these distinctions, upon the presentation of an approved essay on some medical subject, and a rigid and successful examination before a medical board of examiners.

In this manner, it was anticipated that all those practitioners, whose merits really warranted the public confidence, would be gradually drawn within the corporate influence of the profession, and that the example of associated numbers, would oppose a moral check against the march of ignorance. To this end the labors of the society appear to have been principally directed, during the first

nine years of its existence ; and the success of their exertions was exhibited, in the general good feeling, and the marked ability, observed throughout the whole fraternity : its membership was eagerly sought for at home, and its honorary Fellowship highly appreciated abroad.

Candor compels the acknowledgement, that the evidences of the "public utility" of our body in the accumulation and diffusion of medical knowledge, during the period of which we speak, are not so clear ; for the minutes of the society are too frequently, almost meagre to a fault on this head.

The establishment of prizes for medical essays of unusual merit, was several times discussed, and at one time a prize of three hundred dollars was offered for the best treatise on malaria, but without doubt from the extensive, constant, and laborious professional engagements of the Fellows of that day, only one article was offered for the premium, and that was deemed unworthy of the reward.

A communication on cholera infantum and malaria, by the President, and another by Dr. Capelle, on a subject chiefly interesting to the naturalist, were presented in 1790, and several articles of still higher importance were read in 1793, there were some speculations on the resemblance between a peculiarly malignant and fatal form of bilious colic, then prevalent in Delaware, and the yellow fever at the same time ravaging the city of Philadelphia ; also an account of the cure of Typhus fever by the use of cold bathing, both by Dr. Miller. But in 1794, Dr. Sykes had the skill and good fortune to discover and detect the true cause of the colic affection which had cost society some of its best citizens, and so much suffering during the preceding and current years. Observing the close analogy between the most alarming symptoms, and the effects of lead, upon the constitution, as they occur in the *painter's colic*, he was induced to suspect the *adulteration* of *medicine* employed in the treatment of that period, of the diseases peculiar to their locality ; among which medicines in those days Peruvian bark stood prominent. Upon analyzing specimens of that article as it had been furnished by the druggists of Philadelphia, a large admixture of *litharage* was detected, and thus the evil was at once unmasked. The society immediately appointed a committee, to investigate the source of this outrage upon the community, and it was found to have originated in the dishonesty of an employee, engaged in the principal firm in Philadelphia, who dealt in Peruvian bark, to grind the article for the market.



This reckless and dishonest man, (whose name has been consigned to oblivion) being paid for his labor by the pound, and finding litharage resembled bark in color, and was more reducible to the requisite degree of fineness, and of much greater specific gravity; resolved to economise exertion, and influenced by a base cupidity to enhance his wages, he made the mixture, and thus, perhaps, through ignorance of the poisonous properties of the substitute, consigned a large number of his fellow beings, to a horrible death and an untimely grave.

In this accident we find a startling proof of the usefulness of local medical societies, which should always be encouraged, if only to guard against the accidents and impositions to which the health and lives of the people are continually exposed, from the chicane or the ignorance of mere dealers in drugs; and it affords additional confirmation of the propriety of that valuable regulation of a recent Congress in the appointment of a qualified inspector of drugs.

In 1794 we find a notice of a paper presented to the society by Dr. Miller, in which he treats of the various articles of native growth which might be made available as substitutes for the Peruvian bark. Also another paper on Cholera Infantum, and a third containing additional observations, in relation to bilious colic, being an appendix to his communication of the preceding year. These with a few minor papers, accounts of remarkable cases, and communications from other learned bodies complete the catalogue, and it is much to be regretted that neither a full detail, nor even a digested abstract of these essays can be found upon our minutes.

Before we venture however to condemn the paucity of these details, justice requires that two considerations of importance should be well remembered. First, The extreme difficulty with which the whole profession in our State can be assembled at any one point to participate in annual or biennial conclave, and secondly, that during this period of nine years, Delaware was contributing her full share of novel stars to the medical galaxy, not only within her own borders, but also in other States; and that the more general records of the profession are rich in valuable communications from her resident or wandering sons.

How far our peculiar organization may have contributed to this result, by creating an "*esprit du corps*," and stimulating exertions, it is impossible accurately to determine; but that its influence was

wide and most effective, there can be but little doubt; and had the precocity of our infancy been nursed with more attentive care, as it ripened into manhood, it is more than probable that the science of medicine would have rested on a more permanent basis, than latter years have demonstrated, in the State of Delaware.

Time, thus far, had however unquestionably made "the good better," but it is said that humanity like the human pulse advances *per saltum*; and alas! we now approach a period of relaxation.—From the last annual meeting in 1798 to the first in 1822, a period of twenty-four years, we have had record of but few assemblings of the body. There were three in 1811, two in 1812, two in 1813, and one in 1818.

During this long interval of twenty-four years, the ravages of time were made conspicuous to a melancholy extent. Of the distinguished of the olden date, the names of few appear except those of Drs. Tilton, Sykes, Monro and Smith, while a new group, most of whom have since retired to their long repose, are prominent upon the minutes; among the latter, Drs. Gibbons, McLane, Lofland, Naudain, Brincklé, Collins, J. F. Vaughan, Morris, Baker, Adams and Greene, stood pre-eminent, as still continuing to connect the medical profession with the affairs of State—but let us avoid the invidious task of lauding cotemporary merit.

The efforts of the society in this middle portion of its existence seem to have been mainly directed towards remodeling the constitution, and the acquisition of additional legal powers. The first half of the present century, has been unenviably distinguished by the birth and progress of innumerable schools of empiricism in all things, moral and intellectual; and the increase of quackery under the existing laws, perhaps less effectively counterchecked than formerly in Delaware, by the combined efforts and example of the association, began to produce serious alarm, not only in the profession, but with the general public; for it was felt that human life was endangered continually by the host of impostors of every grade, who palmed themselves upon the people as adepts in the art of healing, without any certificate of fitness for their calling or visible marks of an appropriate education. Who were acknowledged totally ignorant of the anatomical structure of the human being; could not appreciate the difference between a healthy and diseased organ, and would have mistaken a congested lung for a healthy liver. A feeling of the ne-

cessity of self-defence, rather, perhaps, than the repeated suggestions, and even petitions of the medical society, at length induced the Legislature, especially enlightened on the subject by our late distinguished fellow-member, Dr. Sykes, to attempt a reform, by endowing the association with novel and far more dictatorial powers for the regulation of medical practice within the State. By a series of acts and amendments passed in the years 1819, 20, 21 and 22, the society was endowed with a control, to a considerable extent absolute, over the abuses of empiricism.

By these enactments, a penalty of fifty dollars, was imposed on all persons attempting to practice in this State, without a license from the medical society, for which a fee of ten dollars was exacted; and the granting of such license was restricted to such candidates only, as could produce "a diploma from some respectable medical school," and such others as submitted themselves, to "a full, strict and impartial examination, by the board of medical examiners." As it is very correctly stated in an able report of a committee, read at the session held at Smyrna, November 6, 1843, this increase of power was not conferred "to promote the interests of the medical profession—but avowedly to protect the people of the State from the evils of empiricism."

This period of comparative inactivity which has just been described, did not pass by without being marked by some traces of lingering vitality in the scientific department of our labors. At the few meetings which were held, several papers on medical subjects, were read, but unfortunately no abstract of their contents have adorned our minutes. One action however, merits attentive notice. At the annual meeting in May 1818, Drs. Joseph Harris, Allan McLane and William Baldwin were appointed delegates to the general convention to be held in June 1819, for the purpose of forming a national pharmacopæ. This was the first effort towards the combined action of the profession throughout the United States, from which so many benefits have already accrued and from which so many more are likely to ensue.

It is not improbable that the local medical societies of this country, will derive their future importance, chiefly, from the fact, that they are or ought to be, the necessary constituency of those annual national conventions, which by concentrating the energies of the entire mass of medical learning and public spirit within our borders, and directing it upon common purposes, have already many



objects of high utility and promise to effect, hereafter others of still greater moment. The influence of such imposing bodies of talent and social standing has even now been productive of good in the halls of national and state legislation, and will be increased, if the local associations are true to their trust, and the proper dignity of the profession. We may congratulate ourselves upon the fact, that upon the very inception of this general movement, Delaware was ready at the call of our common country—that at the darkest hour of our inaction, our sleep was not a Rip Van Winkle sleep,—and that we proved ourselves in this peaceful field, worthy the fame of our patriotic founders, *in the era of giants!* When our country calls,—be it to the arena of science, the march of philanthropy or the *certaminis gaudia*; may gallant little Delaware be ever ready and found foremost to spring to the sound of the trumpet!

Our rapid review of the history of this society draws towards its conclusion, for we have arrived at a period within the memory of many (would that we could say all) of our compeers of to-day; and our remarks henceforth will be presented with less detail, mingling the story of the present with the anticipations of the future.

The year 1822, was marked by two events important to the progress of the institution, the death of the venerable President Tilton, who was immediately succeeded by Dr. Sykes, and the acceptance of the new constitution as modified by the legislature.

Stimulated by its newly acquired powers and responsibilities, the society now leaped forward on its path with renewed energy; the meetings became regular, the minutes more voluminous and the number of its members rapidly greater; but the cares and increase of business, resulting from the necessity of legislating for the government of the practice, the adoption of diplomas and certificates, the examination of candidates, and a thousand duties, growing out of new relations between the corporation, and the whole body of practitioners within the State, materially interfered with the society in the active prosecution of literary and scientific researches.

The association was destined to learn by experience the dangers attendant upon the interference of the laws with the regulation of a liberal profession, and the exercise of legal coercion by a scientific body in a country governed upon purely republican principles. Empiricism which had been previously held somewhat in check, by the moral influence of regular and well educated physicians, felt itself doubly aggrieved, when suffering under legal disabilities, in

consequence of the possession of exclusive privileges by a peculiar class. It soon began to awaken sympathy in a community remarkable for extreme nervousness on this point, and too frequently prone to adopt the chimeras and dogmas of the day. Many deluded and credulous persons were induced to believe that their personal liberty was encroached upon, when prevented from endangering their health or sacrificing their lives at their own option, by seeking the advice of the incompetent. The advocates of medical doctrines, which, those who had received instruction in the most celebrated schools, knew were false, and felt conscientiously bound to frown upon, as neither rationally founded nor practically safe; these advocates assumed to be outraged and ostracised when excluded from fellowship on the ground of their peculiar opinions. Hence originated an exterior opposition, feeble at first, but continually increasing in power, which not unfrequently was cherished into force and nursed into influence by those, who from their elevated and dignified position should have kept aloof from such folly. But "time which makes the good better and the bad worse," also sometimes converts minorities into majorities of influence, when perseverance and self interest urge them on; and it is a matter of surprise that the society should have been able to resist the external pressure, and protect, (as it certainly did,) the citizens of Delaware from most of the evils of empiricism, for seventeen years, from 1822 to 1829.

It was not perhaps, unnatural, that the public should soon learn to contemplate these "exclusive privileges," as they were termed, (though they really were onerous duties,) with a sinister eye; and that the profession should lose a portion of its moral power, from the constant iteration of the charge of interested motives, in endeavoring to shield human life against the tampering of ignorant or impudent pretention.

The science of medicine is recondite. It is placed, "in a well," far beyond the ken of the most professed politician. It would be unreasonable, in the present state of popular education, to suppose a majority of any State legislature, to be competent to decide upon the merits of the conflict, between those who are termed regular practitioners and their antagonists.

The experience of the past few years, has clearly demonstrated, that this has been the age of delusion. For no chimera, however wild in theory or vague in fancy, but has had its advocates; the grossest absurdities have been pronounced philosophic facts; the

tricks of the charlatan have assumed to be scientific truths, and their perpetrators have arrogated to themselves the title of professors. At no period from the time of Paracelsus with his "immortal catholicum," down to the present, have more incongruous and antagonistic schemes been presented, at the same time; and all have had their adherents; the refrigerating process of one has been met by the caloric process of another, and infinitesimal special specific for each symptom (the result of disease) has been antagonized by the single specific for all diseases.

Thus individuals of but mental mediocrity, and certainly without education and principle, armed only in the panoply of their own presumption, have, regardless of consequences madly rushed into the arena to engage in conflict with disease and grapple with the "king of terrors."

Is it to be wondered then, that assemblies composed of men taken from the mass of the community, surrounded with, and in some instances indoctrinated in these heterogenous abominations—when repeatedly assailed, individually and collectively with the complaints against the injustice and oppression of "the privileged class" of practitioners; is it, I say, to be wondered at, that they yielded at length to these renewed assaults?

In 1825, the Legislature added an amendment to the charter, permitting any person practicing without a license, to receive such fees from their patients as might "be voluntarily tendered them." This was the beginning of the overthrow of the newly acquired powers; but the usefulness of the society, was by no means destroyed, by this gentle measure. It was not until 1839 that the *coup de grace* was given this system of public protection, by a repeal of the law prohibiting the recovery of fees, for attendance, so far as it could be applied to "persons practising on the Thompsonian or Botanic system exclusively." Thus one of the objectionable *isms* of the day was regularly legitimated by the Legislature to the prejudice of all the rest. Soon another group of malcontents, clamored still more loudly, against the injustice inflicted upon them; and four years afterwards, another blow was struck at the almost inefficient powers of our "exclusive rights." In 1843, the privileges granted "exclusively" to the Thompsonians, were again extended to include the Homœopathists, "exclusively," and there being no more *isms* of a medical character, at that time in a sufficient state of organization, to assert *their rights*, peace was at length restored.



The power for usefulness, which had been with so much difficulty achieved by the society, in the interval between 1818 and 1822, and so laboriously and happily employed for seventeen following years, being thus completely nullified, and the results of the exertions of almost a generation ruthlessly destroyed, our fraternity was seized with a despondency, which with some of our members almost sank into disgust.

The committee to whose masterly report in 1843, we have already alluded, assumed the position that the profession in this State was in some degree insulted, by this *carte blanche*, given by the Legislature to irregular practice, while an implied responsibility, no longer capable of fulfilment, and the shadow of powers now converted into "pains and penalties" bearing upon learning, science and superior cultivation, *was still continued*, as a burden on our shoulders. It advocated as a necessary vindication of the dignity of the profession, the immediate relinquishment of the charter, of "the Medical Society of the State of Delaware," into the hands of the authority from which it had been derived; and the reconstruction of an institution, as a *voluntary* association, for the promotion of medical science. This report was unanimously *accepted* and ordered to be published, in order that the members might seriously reflect on the subject; its discussion was postponed, and happily as we believe, it was never finally adopted. There was reason, in the feeling engendered by the manner in which the society had been assailed by the representatives of the popular will, and honor, in the desire to withdraw from a position apparently undignified; but as our founders were ever ready to sacrifice themselves, for the common weal in "the days which tried men's souls" even so should such sentiments emulate their descendants. The right of conferring licenses upon the regularly instructed and qualified is still valuable, because it gives us the power to preserve incontaminate within our own jurisdiction the altars of Esculapius. And thus whilst the less enlightened portion of the community, may have lost in personal safety, what it has gained in personal liberty, by regaining the original power, to patronize error or incompetence, as its ambition or cupidity may direct, the society should have recovered that moral influence and weight, with the well informed and more intelligent, which they esteemed it had impaired, by consenting to assume the right of legal dictation, over all practitioners. It still retains all the capacities for worth and usefulness which it possessed

in its first bright decade, and superadds to these the power to enclose within its pale all those whose affiliation it may deem desirable. Nor should we esteem the license fees a severe taxation upon the regular practice. They constitute with our annual contribution but a very moderate income for the support of an institution essential to the well-being and progress of our profession ; and he who would refuse to yield this slight pecuniary aid, to a common interest, can hardly be possessed of those philanthropic feelings which are essential in the members of a liberal profession, whose duties include not only its own advancement but the promotion of the health and happiness of society at large. We have therefore perhaps but little to murmur for in that which has been taken from us ; some may assume that we have almost gained by our losses, and in our corporate capacity enjoy a respectability in position and an extent of power to do good which cannot be possessed by a merely voluntary association. We have learned by somewhat bitter experience, a lesson fully worth at least what we have suffered. We have learned that in order to be permanently effective, we cannot depend on the caprices of assemblies, and that institutions of a country must accord in plan and structure with the genius of its government. We have learned that the dignity and usefulness of the medical profession in a republic cannot be enhanced by legislative grants of exclusive privileges, and legal control beyond its proper fellowship. If the march of empiricism and error is ever to be checked, it must be by enlightening the mind of the public in general, upon physiological and hygienic truths and principles, in a manner scientific and clear to the comprehension. Who that has been taught to look understandingly, even, though it be partially, and but for a moment, upon the delicate structure and most complicated actions of the human frame, could afterwards be led to believe, that the half is greater than the whole, or that vegetable poisons are less noxious and fatal than those derived from inorganic nature ? Why should not rational physiology be taught in our common schools, not from the trashy and compiled text books now too usually found in our academies, but from the labors of the really learned in the great science of life, where they should be taught things and not words.

Why shall not our corporate medical societies exert their influence in this as well as other directions ? Their combined influence would be abundantly sufficient to accomplish such a purpose ; and in a few years, the beneficial consequences would far outbalance



those which have followed all the efforts of our legislators for the protection of the public health.

Let us now turn from this somewhat painful subject to one of a more cheerful character.

Ours is indeed a noble science. For although interminable self sacrifice is continually demanded in its pursuit, still we have the proud consolation, that all our efforts are in the cause of humanity in endeavoring to relieve "the ills that flesh is heir to." We visit and heal the sick, allay the pang of suffering, comfort the afflicted and succour the distressed. We repair and preserve these frail bodies, and feel that our profession stands at the head, as that to repair is but a few degrees lower than to create.

Our science is not only noble, but it is rapidly progressing—from the meeting of the Convention to form a National Pharmacopæ in 1819, the movement of the profession throughout the union has been steadily advancing, and becoming concentrated to most useful purposes, in the form of national conventions for specific ends.

The American Medical Association holding its annual meetings in various cities of the North, South, East and West of this great republic, and consisting of a well-regulated representation from all the principal medical corporations and societies of this country, has given increasing impetus to the progress of the science. It has discussed questions and originated measures of vital importance to us, and to humanity, whose cause is ours. Here, as on all former occasions, when the whole country has been exercised on medical subjects, Delaware has answered promptly to the call of her sister States, and her delegates have been her sponsors in the assemblages of the learned.

That our State Society has been productive of much good there can be but little doubt, and that its sphere for usefulness is not ended, subsequent events will amply demonstrate. We have seen that one of the earliest scientific efforts of our society, was the investigation of a most fatal *domestic* adulteration of Peruvian bark—outrages of a similar character I doubt not are numerous and continual, and the absence of success from a medical prescription may in many cases be traced to an inferior quality or an adulterated condition, of the article prescribed. The Colleges of Pharmacy may partially protect the large cities, where they are located, from the evil consequent on these horrible crimes, instigated as they are by the keen lust for gold; but what is there to protect the interior?



*Foreign* impositions of this nature are now in a good degree prevented, by the inspectors of drugs at our principal sea-ports, but *domestic* adulteration still continues to an alarming extent,—Should we not here, (without colleges of pharmacy,) move early in this matter, and immediately adopt some measures to secure the appointment of domestic inspectors within our State. The example would assuredly be followed by our sister States, and the honor of originating the plan, would add another gem to the coronet of our fraternity. We owe the effort to the memory of the lamented Sykes!

But I will not detain you with further specifications of the professional objects which call loudly for our exertions. Let it suffice to say, our fathers “were men of the nation”—the times require that we, their successors, should be “men of the nation likewise.”

If then we expect to gratify the loftiest hope for the future, we must be engaged in energetic action. We have a character to maintain that has been hallowed by age, and the deeds of the good men of “olden time.” Let us be true to ourselves and to the honor of Delaware. Let County Medical Societies be instituted in those counties where they do not now exist; let the medical practitioners of the County meet and mingle together frequently—*ex-collisioné scintille*. The good wishes of our fellow citizens will cheer our path, acrimony and jealousy will be subdued, and we shall rapidly and surely advance the elevation and dignity of our profession.

And to you, my fellow citizens, who have honored us with your presence, patiently listening to a theme which precludes all eloquence, let us hope that our actions may be worthy of the reputation of our predecessors, and of your conscientious approval—

“And in life’s closing hour when the trembling soul flies,”  
may we be able in our latent accents to affirm, that we have done our duty—that we have kept the faith—and be prepared confidently and calmly to resign our spirits to the great “Giver of all good.”

And that the generations who shall succeed us, when they shall read the medical history of our times, may be able to exclaim, “These men were of the category of those, whom time has not rendered worse.”